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Provisional

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Monday, 15 September 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Sir Emyr Jones Parry	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tidjani
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Sow
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Letter dated 12 September 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/880)

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03-51300 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Nepal and Norway, in which they request to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Sharma (Nepal) and Mr. Løvald (Norway) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to remind speakers of the Council's earlier decision that interventions should, if possible, be confined to just three minutes.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the pleasure, at the outset, of congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I have every confidence that your rich expertise will lead the Council's work to great success, with regard to both this international Organization and the current international challenges. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Syrian presidency of the Council last month. It is also a pleasure for us to address the Council, as we assume the chairmanship of the Arab Group this month.

The Security Council is meeting at a time characterized by the holding of many meetings and the adoption of many resolutions and numerous condemnations of all the negative developments. This activity does not, however, even attempt to mitigate Israel's intransigence and its persistence in expansionist settlement policies — to say nothing of its refusal to abide, as an occupying Power, by United Nations and other Security Council resolutions. That Power has continued to carry out every sort of aggression, persecution and oppression against the Palestinian people and has repeatedly scuttled every effort to reach a political settlement.

It is no surprise to us that the road map has reached a dead end. Since the map was introduced, Israel has intransigently endeavoured to abort it. It has also escalated its military campaign, overrun cities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and continued its policy of siege, closure and liquidation directed against the symbols of Palestinian resistance. In addition, it has continued to build an expansionist separation wall, despite international rejection of such a destructive step. It has dealt a powerful blow to every political effort, including those of the Quartet regarding the road map. We hope that the Council will hold a special meeting to discuss this separation wall.

But Israel has not stopped at that. It has gone so far as to declare, last Thursday, a sudden decision to expel President Yasser Arafat from Palestinian territory. In so doing, it has signalled a move unprecedented in nature that will lead the entire situation to the point of no return. If Israel succeeds, the consequences will be extremely negative. The international community and the United Nations are bound by their commitment to peace and security to go beyond rejecting and condemning such a step. The Security Council, in particular, is confronted with a major and immediate challenge to its ability to uphold its responsibilities in that regard. The Council should compel Israel to reverse its decision that could put a definitive end to peace efforts and could threaten a complete and uncontrollable explosion of the situation in the Middle East.

The peoples of the world, and those of the Arab and Islamic world in particular, expect the Security Council to take a decisive decision to end Israeli intransigence and to put things in proper perspective in that explosive region of the world, so that all the parties concerned can return to the path of peace and fully implement their commitments under the road map. They also expect the Council to compel Israel to reverse its latest decision.

The Council no doubt saw the reaction of the angry Palestinian street, which is still gripped by the extremely tense situation following the announcement of Israel's decision. Suffice it to say that the Israeli decision coincides with the tenth anniversary of the Oslo Accords. Israel is in effect declaring its intention to terminate the existence of the Palestinian Authority

and to destroy the entire peace process, in complete disregard of the road map, the efforts of the Quartet and scores of Security Council resolutions. The Council must measure up to its responsibilities as the guardian of international law and maintainer of international peace and security.

I would like to conclude by saying that what we fear most is that, if the Council limits its reaction to condemnation and rejection of Israel's latest decisions, Council resolutions will not be implemented by Israel. That would be tantamount to giving Israel a green light to carry out its decision. We heard the Israeli Cabinet state that President Arafat is an obstacle to peace and that Israel will do its utmost to remove that obstacle. Israel's Vice Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Olmert, then said on Israeli television that killing Arafat is an available option. We must all realize by now that Israel is the country most guilty of violating international law and resolutions. It does not abide by the rules and appears to be determined to realize its declared intentions despite international rejection. It will do just that unless the Security Council shoulders its responsibilities and takes decisive steps to put an end to Israeli intransigence before it is too late.

The President: I thank the representative of Sudan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Along with the international community and every world capital, Egypt has expressed its rejection, denunciation and condemnation of the Israeli decision that reflects Israel's contravention of every international norm and law and its defiance of the will of the international community. The same goes for its continued policy of provocation and aggression aimed at aborting the serious and sincere efforts made to achieve a settlement that guarantees peace and security for the peoples of Palestine and Israel. Those who have made the decision to expel President Arafat from his homeland, who is the legitimate and democratically elected President, are making a huge mistake vis-à-vis peace and the right of their people to live in their own State alongside the Palestinian State.

Relations between the Israeli and Palestinian parties are at a critical juncture. All interested parties and those who called for the establishment of peace and stability on the basis of justice and legitimacy, foremost among which is Egypt, have all attempted to establish the necessary atmosphere conducive to the faithful and full implementation of the road map so as to bring about the desired settlement. Most regrettably, we have come up against Israel's clear determination to continue its policy of assassinating Palestinian activists. We have also seen a defiance of the will of the international community with the continued construction of the expansionist wall, usurping Palestinian land and preventing Palestinians from living a normal life. That has led to a cycle of violence and counter-violence: the violence of occupation and aggression and the violence of resistance. There is a huge difference between the two, and Egypt has strongly condemned any actions affecting civilians. Unfortunately, there are some people in Israel — even in positions of responsibility — who continue to believe that a settlement can only take place subject to their conditions alone and under their diktat. That cannot be acceptable to the international community.

The Security Council is today called upon to face that new Israeli threat. The Council is also called upon to reiterate its adherence to the road map in order to achieve the objective of two States and two peoples, Palestinian and Israeli, living in peace and good-neighbourliness on the basis of mutual respect, rather than arrogance and attempted humiliation, and of understanding rather than the resort to force.

In conclusion, these are critical moments in the history of this longstanding conflict. Years of experience have shown that it can be settled, first, only through Israel's conviction and recognition of the full right of the Palestinians to establish their independent State on their national soil, occupied since 4 June 1967. We do not believe that Israel acts in the full conviction of that necessity. Secondly, the Palestinians must recognize the right of the Israeli and Palestinian States to live in peace and security within secure and recognized borders. We do not believe that there is any quarrel within Palestinian society on this issue. The international community and the major Powers must today work vigorously and resolutely to establish the atmosphere necessary to a return to negotiations in order to achieve these objectives and to stand up firmly to such behaviour that will have catastrophic consequences for all of us.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your accession to the presidency of the Security Council and to thank you for having kindly acceded to the request of the Group of Arab States to convene this debate on an issue of paramount importance.

I should also like to congratulate Ambassador Mekdad of Syria, whose presidency of the Council last month was both effective and eventful.

My delegation is speaking before the Council today to express its deep concern over the grave deterioration of the political, security and humanitarian situation in occupied Palestine, fraught with genuine and serious threats to the existence and physical integrity of the Palestinian people and to peace and stability throughout the region.

Ten years after the signing of the Oslo agreements, the peace process remains deadlocked, despite the somewhat measured hopes raised by the launching of the road map initiative by the Quartet with a view to reinvigorating it. It is against the yardstick of the primary objective of a just, lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict — a key element of our common goal of maintaining international peace and security — that my country intends to measure this latest incredible provocation by the occupying Power in Palestine. This provocation has taken place — by mere coincidence? — 10 years to the day after Oslo and seeks to banish, in complete illegality and with customary arrogance and contempt for law, President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority, democratically elected by his people with the necessary legitimacy to negotiate on its behalf with the Israeli enemy that is occupying its land and to reach a lasting settlement leading to the implementation of its flouted national rights.

Far more serious, by the admission of the Israeli Vice Prime Minister, killing Yasser Arafat is one of the options now open to the army to remove the President of the Palestinian Authority, who is seen as an obstacle to be done away with at all costs. This decision, if implemented, will only strike the final blow to a peace process that is already foundering and pull Palestine and the entire region into a spiral of violence that nothing and no one will be able to control. It will further weaken an international order that has already been subjected to tension and challenges of all sorts.

It seems clear that, since September 2000 and, even more, since the launching of the road map, the ongoing policy of the occupying Power has no other objective than to thwart the very concept of a Palestinian State and to prevent its establishment. All of the illegal and criminal actions pursued daily by the occupying Power — from its encouragement of illegal settlements and its restriction of the basic freedoms of the Palestinians and their leaders, all the way to targeted assassinations of officials and activists of various Palestinian organizations — are all part of a strategy of creating ongoing tension in exclusive service to the goal of all-out war.

Israel is pursuing the illusions of a peace won by unrestrained warfare that will gain it total victory, without concern for the fallout of this policy for international peace and security. It clearly does not seek a negotiated peace guaranteed by the international community, which would of necessity entail the return of lands conquered by force. Israel thereby intends to benefit from the international situation to modify realities on the Palestinian ground by borrowing from the past a technique that has been conclusively rejected by the international community: the building of physical walls to shore up the wall of hatred and mistrust thrown up by the ongoing wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, whom history has condemned to live side by side.

By threatening to expel the Nobel peace laureate, it is peace itself that Israel is seeking to banish and the hope of a negotiated solution to bury. Algeria, for its part, will not fall into the trap set by Israel for the international community of imposing itself on the Palestinian people in substitution for the choice of several generations of leaders who have been equally sincere concerning the aspirations of their people and who would seem most appropriate to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinian people a just, definitive and lasting settlement leading to the establishment of a viable, democratic national Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and living in peace with all its neighbours.

Algeria has firmly stood by the heroic Palestinian people and its leadership and vigorously condemns Israel's decision concerning President Arafat and welcomes the international community's position, voiced through the appeals of the Security Council on 12 September and the Secretary-General, as well as by other Powers, to Israel not to carry out its threat.

Lastly, Algeria believes that the Security Council must firmly support all such appeals by proceeding to adopt the draft resolution submitted by Angola on behalf of the Group of Non-Aligned States so that legality may prevail.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to seize this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, and to wish you success in presiding over the Security Council this month. I should also like to extend my sincere thanks to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Syria, for his wise conduct of the work of the Council last month.

Your prompt response to the request to convene such an important meeting of the Security Council reflects the growing international concern regarding the tragic and serious developments taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories due to the illegal acts and measures taken by the Government of Israel in violation of humanitarian and international law.

Massive efforts have been made by the Quartet and the countries of the region in recent months to contain the violence and to relaunch negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis with a view to implementing the road map. Nevertheless, we have noticed that the Government of Israel has on a daily basis gradually escalated its hostile and systematic campaign against the Palestinian people and their national leadership. This campaign reflects Israel's premeditated intention to jettison the road map, which obligates it legally to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories and to dismantle its illegal settlements therein, in order to allow the Palestinians to establish their independent State with al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. Otherwise, how could the world explain the acts undertaken daily by the Government of Israel, including blockade, deliberate killings, the arbitrary arrest of hundreds of innocent Palestinians and its unjustifiable and irresponsible destruction of Palestinian national institutions and cities, as well as public and private properties?

The Government of Israel has recently taken a decision to deport the elected Palestinian President. The United Arab Emirates condemns all attempts made by Israel to weaken the Palestinian people and sow discord among their factions through the decision to deport their legitimately elected President, Mr. Yasser Arafat, or to kill him, as recently declared by the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel. Israel has already exercised all forms of isolation, blockade and humiliation against him. The United Arab Emirates considers such provocative and criminal actions an escalation of war, state terrorism and a declaration of a new war against Palestinians that will only lead to the destruction of all efforts made to reach peace, end violence, implement the road map and achieve peace and stability in the Middle East.

Therefore, we call upon the Quartet and the Security Council to block this decision and to take the necessary measures to free Israel to reverse it unconditionally. We reiterate our full support for and our solidarity with the Palestinian people and their national leadership in their struggle against the campaign initiated by Israel. We call upon the international community to re-emphasize the following.

First, President Yasser Arafat is the legitimate elected President of the Palestinian people. The Government of Israel, as the occupying Power, must ensure his safety, lift the curfew imposed on him and stop all threats to kill him. The Government of Israel must not make any attempt to deport the Palestinian President or any other Palestinian citizen, and must abide by international and humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

Secondly, the Government of Israel must be ordered to immediately cease extrajudicial executions and all acts of hostility against the Palestinian people or their national leadership. The Israeli Government must also fulfil its obligations under the road map pursuant to the relevant international resolutions, particularly resolutions 181 (1947), 242 (1967), 338 (!973) and 1397 (2002).

Thirdly, and finally, additional political, moral and financial support must be provided to the Palestinian Authority and its new Prime Minister, in order to enable him to form a Palestinian Government capable of reconstructing the national infrastructure and of responding to the growing needs of the Palestinian people, needs resulting from being subjected daily to Israeli occupation, siege and violence.

Mr. Benaouna (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Moroccan

delegation, to congratulate the presidency of the United Kingdom for its excellent work this month to strengthen international peace and security. I also wish to thank Mr. Roed-Larsen. I listened with interest to his comprehensive and objective briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including Palestine.

This is a critical time. The Council is meeting at a time when we are witnessing an unprecedented aggravation of the situation in Palestine with violence and destruction increasing. The Palestinian population, in addition to its daily insecurity, is enduring all manner of restrictions. In this situation, when the international community is appealing for more channels for the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, the Israeli authorities decided in principle last Thursday that they would deport President Yasser Arafat.

That decision has been taken in flagrant disregard of the most elementary rules of international law. President Arafat is the legitimate leader of the Palestinian Authority and was democratically elected by the Palestinian people. Furthermore, President Yasser Arafat, who enjoys unquestioned historical legitimacy, symbolizes the deep aspirations of the Palestinian people to liberation and a decent future for their children.

The decision to banish President Arafat can only strike the final blow to the peace process, particularly to the efforts deployed by the Quartet to craft the stages and processes for a fair and lasting solution, in keeping with Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1397 (2002), which call for putting an end to the Israeli occupation and creating the conditions for establishing a sovereign Palestinian State that will coexist side by side in peace with Israel.

In the light of this alarming situation, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, President of the al-Quds Committee, immediately appealed to the members of the Quartet to intervene without delay in order to prevent Israel from carrying out its illegal decision. His Majesty also conveyed a message to the Israeli authorities expressing his profound disquiet and grave concern about the serious consequences of expelling President Arafat or of any attack on his person or security.

The Kingdom of Morocco firmly believes that the resolution of this conflict requires a dialogue and the return of the parties to the negotiating table. That should take place as soon as possible, without preconditions or unilateral initiatives that might accelerate an escalation of the spiral of violence and retaliation.

As for us, we have often condemned terrorism, as did the representative of Palestine this morning. We have condemned terrorism, regardless of its origin and motivations. Yet we have always insisted that every effort be made to eliminate the causes of this scourge.

Wisdom, moderation and dialogue remain the best guarantors of a fair and lasting solution to the Middle East crisis. It is in that spirit that the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its full readiness to multiply efforts and contacts in order to restore the momentum of the road map co-sponsored by the Quartet and supported by the international community as a whole. We keenly hope that, through the Security Council, the international community will send Israel a clear message to reconsider its decision. We appeal for an end to all forms of violence.

We must not allow the circle of violence and reprisals to lead us off the path of peace, security and regional stability. The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, must shoulder its responsibilities with respect to the deteriorating situation in Palestine.

The goal is clear. The creation of a Palestinian State is the only way to ensure security for all the children of the region. It is certainly not by eliminating the legitimate Palestinian interlocutor that the Israeli authorities will make progress towards greater security and tranquillity.

The President: I thank the representative of Morocco for his kind words addressed to me. The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Bahrain, on whom I now call.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to express our thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. President, and all the members of the Council for holding, under your wise and capable presidency, this important meeting of the Security Council to discuss the deteriorating situation in the Palestinian territories. We would also like to extend our thanks to your honourable predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who spared no effort to lead the work of the Council to success last month.

This meeting of the Security Council is taking place at a time of grave circumstances in the Middle

East and the seriously deteriorating situation that the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority have witnessed on a daily basis owing to continued Israeli aggression. The Israeli decision in principle to expel President Arafat, who was elected by the Palestinian people, will have serious consequences on the situation in the Palestinian territories. It will gravely impact on all efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the region, a peace for which we have called for a very long time. If implemented, the decision to expel President Arafat will seriously affect stability and will be a setback to peace in the Middle East, for which the Arab States have been seriously and sincerely working. Mr. Arafat's expulsion would be a further act of defiance against the international community.

We can only express our grave concern for the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the Israeli Government's insistence on its policy of assassination and of aborting all peace efforts by imposing conditions not contained in the peace process known as the road map. Furthermore, Israel continues to construct its security wall of separation on the pretext of ensuring its own security, while the main objective of that wall really is to gain control over more of the Palestinian territories. Continuing to build the separation wall will gravely harm peace efforts and confidence-building measures between the parties as stipulated in the road map and will even further suffocate the Palestinian people.

The ceasefire declared by the Palestinian factions and by Israel represented a positive step towards an atmosphere of peace and stability in the region. However, Israel's persistence in its policy of assassination has gravely harmed that ceasefire. Therefore, we believe that the Israeli Government should put an immediate end to its policies of assassination, violence, assaulting cities and destroying homes, and other measures that can only harm the road map and the peace process as a whole. The international community as represented by the Security Council should demand that the Israeli Government cease its attempts to abort the road map and assume its international obligations for the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

In that context, we believe that the time has come for the Security Council to dispatch an international force to disengage the two sides, as another contribution by the United Nations to the final settlement of the peace process in the region.

In conclusion, we can only hope that our deliberations will lead to tangible efforts that pave the way for comprehensive peace in the region. However, it should once again be reaffirmed that peace and security in the Middle East can be achieved only through the implementation of United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which call for an end to Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories, for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and for the return of all refugees and displaced persons to their lands.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list under rule 39 is the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States, Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, on whom I now call.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and wish you every success in your endeavour. I would also like to express our thanks to the delegation of Syria for its effective and able presidency of the Council last month. I also take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Fayssal Mekdad on his appointment as Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations.

The crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict is Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories and its blocking of all efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Israel continues to pursue that policy despite the calls of the international community, the resolutions of the Security Council and the Arab peace initiative adopted at the 2002 Beirut Summit, which was unanimously welcomed by the Security Council but rejected by Israel.

After 50 years of war and violence, when will the Government of Israel be persuaded that a policy of war, violence and force will not solve the question of the Middle East? When will it be persuaded that peace negotiations and the implementation of the resolutions of international legality are the only way for Israel, the State of Palestine and all other States of the region to live in peace, security and stability? Israel's attempt to recast the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the optic of the war against terrorism is a failed and ridiculous effort deceiving no one. The Palestinian people are the

victims of Israel's arbitrary practices. The crux of the conflict is Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Mr. Roed-Larsen has painted a bleak picture of the situation of the Palestinian people as a result of the occupation and the practices of the Israeli forces. He once again portrayed the bleak future of the prospects of peace in the region, owing to Israeli intransigence. Israel has put up all kinds of obstacles to the implementation of the road map. Now it continues to establish settlements and construct an expansionist wall, which will not provide security for the Israelis. Rather, it puts the Palestinian people in an enormous jail.

Ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a just peace is the only way to provide security for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples alike. Israel's violation of international humanitarian law and of the Geneva Conventions has become routine, as if it were of no concern to anyone in the international community. Israel has even gone so far as to adopt an official decision in principle to expel President Arafat, the elected President of the Palestinian people, to threaten his safety and his life. That is an illegal and immoral decision, and any attack on the Palestinian President is an attack on the Palestinian people as a whole. Israel knows that attacking him will not lead to peace or security, but rather will fan the flames of violence and will increase the wrath of the Palestinian people.

How can the Security Council stand idly by, in full view of Israel's flagrant defiance of the international community? We call upon the Council to take a clear stand that will put an end to Israel's flouting of moral values and of international laws and that will compel it to return to the path of peace by implementing the road map and withdrawing from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and the Sheba'a Farms in Lebanon, according to the Arab peace initiative and in order to achieve a just and lasting solution in the region.

The President: I congratulate the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations on his comparative brevity.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Papa Louis Fall, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Wehbe, Permanent Representative of Syria, who led the work of the Council last month with exemplary effectiveness.

In addition, I am grateful to you, Mr. President, and to members of the Council for having allowed me to take the floor in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to participate with you in this important debate — initiated by the Arab Group — on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, following the Israeli decision in principle to expel or banish the President of the Palestinian Authority, His Excellency Mr. Arafat.

I have two series of comments to make. The first concerns the explosive situation on the ground following the attacks and incursions by the Israeli army on Palestinian territory, the extrajudicial executions and the spiral of attacks, violence, counter-violence, vengeance, counter-vengeance, which — as has been repeatedly stated here — is rooted in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. I would add that the situation has worsened extremely seriously, since we have recently witnessed suicide attacks and loss of human life on the part of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Our Committee, as it has always done, most vigorously condemns all forms of violence and all attacks, whatever the motivations, whoever the victims and whatever the justifications, a priori or a posteriori. Because life is sacred, we cannot use children or other innocent people to seek to support any cause of any sort; we are very clear on that.

Israel is continuing to plant settlements in Palestinian territory, in total violation of international law, and I believe that that deserves to be emphasized. The Council truly needs to send a strong signal to the occupying Power to make it understand — in the context of the international community's condemnation — that those actions must cease. There must also be an end to the building of the separation wall, which will only encroach seriously on Palestinian territory and which, if we are not careful, will be a sort of fait accompli that predetermines the future relationship and the drawing of the border.

The second series of observations that I should like to make concerns the threat of banishment or deportation decided in principle by the Israeli Government. Is it a trial balloon, a deliberate intention or a well-considered decision, or is it a kind of diversion — a diversion with incalculable consequences? At a time when all our attention is focused on the need for both parties to implement the road map, is it an attempt to divert attention in order to create a new causus belli — a new situation based on which the community's attention would be focused elsewhere, and we would ask Israel to show its understanding, to do this or that, and everyone would move in Israel's direction, to call upon it to reverse its decision? That would risk shifting attention from the origin of the problem, which is the occupation of Palestinian territory and the continued building of the separation wall.

Having said that, I think that the Council is at a crossroads, because a grave decision has been made and a personality of the Israeli Government, no less, has indicated that Israel has several options, including the elimination of President Arafat. There is only a short distance between that and a killing or an assassination. And if that were to take place, the consequences would be unpredictable, not only for Israel and Palestine, but also for the Middle East and the whole international community, even Africa.

Here, I should like to say that, in certain countries where prayers are said in mosques on Friday — such in as Senegal, where I am from — we are certain that this situation would be used to create chaos and that it could even lead to the breaking of diplomatic relations between some countries or between some countries and Israel, which we do not want to happen. That is why we call upon Israel to be measured, to have a sense of discernment and to be careful, because someone could make an appeal, perhaps out of a burst of anger or to launch a trial balloon, but others — who already have the opportunity to assassinate a Prime Minister, co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize — may take that appeal seriously and could go beyond Israel's proclaimed intention. An accident, including unintended friendly fire, can occur anywhere.

So that is why our Committee would like to focus the Council's attention and to raise its awareness of the need for the international community to help the Palestinian people, who live in a most deplorable economic situation. We ask for the assistance of the United Nations family and of donor countries, otherwise the situation will worsen. We ask that the road map be implemented in good faith by all the parties so that that vision — which was initiated by President Bush, adopted by the Arab Summit and the Security Council and endorsed by the African Union in its decision of last July at Maputo — is realized at last, and so that the Cassandras, the extremists on both sides will never again be able to carry out their pernicious designs so harmful to the peace we all seek.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Bangladesh. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): It would be remiss of me, Mr. President, were I to begin without commending the delegation of the United Kingdom for the remarkable leadership that it has brought to the Council's proceedings during these trying times. Syria is also to be praised for the role that it played during its presidency last month.

My delegation is in accord with the statement to be made later by the Ambassador of Malaysia, which holds the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Bangladesh is deeply concerned about the evolving situation in the Middle East, which, with each passing day, is sharpening the pains of Palestine. The spiralling violence and bloodletting are, to say the least, very disturbing. However, a source of greater dismay is the fact that an end to the impasse is nowhere in sight. The road map to peace appears to lie in tatters.

The thin rays of hope that had appeared on the horizon now seem to have been eclipsed by the looming clouds of despair and destruction. The latest in the series of misjudgements that have exacerbated the deteriorating situation is the decision by Israel to expel President Yasser Arafat.

The Government of Bangladesh issued a statement in Dhaka strongly condemning and denouncing that decision and urging its withdrawal. It also demanded the immediate pullout of Israeli forces from the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories. That Government statement also observed that the decision will create serious obstacles in implementing the road map, which among other things envisages an independent, sovereign and democratic Palestine by 2005.

The Council needs to act, and needs to act soon, to prevent the escalation of horror and hatred. We need to call a halt to the acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction. The efforts of the Quartet must be relentlessly pursued, and confidence in the efficacy of the road map must be restored. Both sides must be persuaded to return to the negotiating table. The appropriate climate must be created in order for that to happen. No compromise on Palestine can be as painful as the failure to reach one.

We all recognize that these will not be easy tasks for us. For these aims to be realized, the international community must take action swiftly, and justly, so that the sufferings of the people of that region, which have been so great and have gone on for so long, cease.

Inflammatory statements will not — cannot — stem the tide of anger and frustration; instead, they will only fuel negative instincts. Harsh language will not — cannot — enhance understanding; instead, it will act as an impediment. These must be refrained from.

We urge calm and temperance in both words and deeds. It cannot be that — in those holy lands from which the three great faiths of Islam, Judaism and Christianity have emanated, as have, in the past, messages of peace and harmony — restraint and reason today are receding virtues. This trend must be halted. Those values, which are the proud heritage of the Muslim, the Jew and the Christian, must be resurrected. Nothing would give us more satisfaction or greater joy.

Bangladesh will seek to contribute to that end in every possible way, in cooperation with all others within and outside the Council, to ensure the triumph of the spirit of tolerance and the rekindling of the torch of hope.

The President: I thank the representative of Bangladesh for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I am speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We congratulate the United Kingdom upon its assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month, and we thank Syria for its work last month.

The Non-Aligned Movement had noted some encouraging developments in the peace process, with the beginning of the implementation of the road map. However, we are now deeply concerned by the recent turn of events. In the past month we have seen a sharp increase in violence, with repeated Israeli incursions into Palestinian cities; the wilful killing of Palestinian civilians, including extrajudicial executions; excessive and indiscriminate use of force; and the deadly suicide bombings against Israelis. We are indeed dismayed that both innocent Palestinian and Israeli civilians have been killed. Regrettably, many more will die if the spiral of violence worsens. The Movement condemns such acts of violence and deeply regrets the loss of innocent lives on both sides of the conflict. Peace will recede further towards the horizon if the current cycle of violence is allowed to escalate.

The Non-Aligned Movement is committed to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Movement firmly supports the two-State solution, based on the 1967 line. We believe that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and national independence and the exercise of sovereignty in their State, Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We call on Israel to come to its senses and accept the two-State solution, as envisaged by Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) and promoted by the road map. Israel's acceptance of and commitment to the State of Palestine is the only way to ensure Israel's security. Continued Israeli occupation and harsh military action cannot be a viable solution.

In this regard, we continue to call for the revival of the road map and further intensive efforts by the Quartet and the parties concerned. We welcome the meeting of the Quartet scheduled to take place in New York next week.

The recent decision of the Israeli Security Cabinet to expel President Yasser Arafat, a democratically elected leader of Palestine, is yet again a prime example of Israel's wilful attempts to intimidate and dominate the Palestinian people, its disregard for international opinion and its contempt for international law. We are shocked at the extent of Israel's intentions, as clearly reflected by the statement of the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel that killing President Arafat was definitely an option. We wish to remind the Council that such a measure by Israel would

be a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. For Israel to even consider such a measure at this critical stage in the peace process is more than irresponsible. This provocative decision will only worsen the situation and spark a greater cycle of violence. It will serve only to undermine any progress in the fragile peace process. The international community and the Security Council must not be paralysed in the face of this Israeli decision. The Council must prevent the execution of the threat against President Arafat and uphold the rule of law.

The problem of Israel's continued settlement policies and its construction of the separation wall in Gaza cannot be ignored either. Israel's settler colonialism activities and having a grave impact on the Palestinian people. They remain a major impediment to progress in the peace process and severely undermine the creation of a viable contiguous Palestinian State. We call on the Security Council to act decisively with a view to the destruction of the wall and to preventing its completion. Israel must be pressured to cease the construction of the wall. As envisaged by the road map, Israel must, indeed, dismantle settlement outposts and freeze all settlement activity.

The humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population living under Israeli occupation is cause for grave concern. The Non-Aligned Movement calls on Israel to cease this humiliation of the Palestinian people. If Israel is serious in wanting a just and lasting solution to the conflict, it must know that the Palestinian people need to see real and tangible benefits in their lives for peace to be achieved. The solution for both sides is to return to the negotiating table, not increasing violence and oppression.

We urge the Security Council to take a clear and definite position today by adopting a resolution, which should send a strong message from the Council against Israel's decision to remove President Arafat.

The President: I was just doing some mental arithmetic. The meeting started close to on time and speakers have been averaging five and a half minutes each. The Council did agree it was going to be three minutes per speaker. May I therefore appeal to speakers to abide by that? I have a gavel and a watch, and I may start to bash the gavel after three and a half minutes. Speakers have been warned. I do want to respect the request that we go into consultations following the meeting.

The next speaker is the representative of India, on whom I now call.

Mr. Nambiar (India): I wish to felicitate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also congratulate Syria for its steering of the Council's work in August.

This open meeting of the Security Council has been convened at relatively short notice to deal with the increasing spiral of violence in the Middle East and the decision of the Israeli authorities to initiate action that could lead to the expulsion of President Arafat.

India has consistently regarded President Arafat as the elected leader of the Palestinian people and as a symbol of their cause. His expulsion and removal from the scene would be indefensible in international law. It would represent an affront to the Palestinian people, as well as to the international community at large, and must attract the severest condemnation worldwide. Apart from serving no constructive purpose, it would negate all efforts towards reconciliation. More important, it is likely to lead to an increased wave of anger and resultant violence in the region. Such a move is bound to exacerbate the situation and could prove politically counterproductive. It would definitely have a negative effect on the Middle East peace process.

Israel remains oblivious of the limitations of its uni-dimensional policy based on a military approach that relies on the might of the Israeli Defence Force, without recourse to a concomitant political approach. Its policy of military blockades, curfews and restrictions perpetuates continued dislocation of normal life, economic deprivation and loss of freedom and further demoralization of the Palestinian people. That has led, inevitably, to continuing acts of violence and retribution against Israeli forces.

India has always maintained that the only answer to the ongoing violence would be for both sides to resolutely move forward on the path of dialogue and reconciliation. There must be no wavering in the face of the gravest provocations posed by extremist elements on both sides, who seem to share a common goal, namely, that of denying peace to their peoples. We urge both sides to refuse to be provoked into responding by abandoning the path to peace.

The few months of relative calm after the launch of the road map put forward by the Quartet offered hope to the peoples of the region and the world over

for the prospect of peace. Unfortunately, the brutal reach of terror and retribution has negated each budding move towards peace. Targeted assassinations, acts of unwarranted violence, indiscriminate killings and the cycle of reprisals must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. They cannot contribute to a sense of security for any of the parties.

The occupied territories continue to face the threat of economic collapse and social destitution. For the sake of the people of the region it is critical that the two sides, with the assistance of all other parties concerned, move resolutely forward in their search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Israel has an obligation to exercise self-restraint and patience. It has resorted increasingly to extreme measures, such as extra-judicial killings and armed incursions in Palestinian areas. We are not unaware of the provocations Israel itself has been subjected to. But its decision to persevere with the construction of a wall that cuts across a wide swath of Palestinian land, annexes agricultural areas, destroys dwellings and separates families is both unjust and illegal. Such actions can only increase the sense of despair and frustration among Palestinians and aggravate a situation already vitiated by the imposition of hardships and the suffering imposed by a regime of blockades and roadblocks.

India has consistently supported the Palestinian cause. Apart from this having roots in our traditional ties with the Arab world, India's commitment to peace and stability in the region is a cardinal element of its foreign policy. As part of a broader traditional engagement with Palestine, thousands of Palestinian students have studied in India. There are extensive people-to-people contacts between us, and we have assisted the Palestinian National Authority in upgrading human resources and its nation-building capacities. That will continue to expand.

We have recently seen the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister's reported statement on the assassination of President Arafat being an option. We note that the reported statement injects greater stridency in Israel's announcements. India joins the international community in urging Israel to exercise restraint in respect of any plan it may have that could adversely affect the safety of life and personal freedom of President Arafat or remove him forcibly from Palestinian territory.

At the same time, India strongly condemns all acts of terrorism and violence, and reiterates its position that there can be no justification whatsoever for attacks against unarmed civilians, women and children. Only a complete cessation of violence can provide the conducive environment for a continuation of dialogue. We reiterate the need for both sides to fulfil their obligations under the Quartet road map, and strongly emphasize that every effort be made to ensure its implementation, so that the vision of two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders can be realised and a just and durable peace is established in the region based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

The President: I said my little piece before lunch — and I said it when I assumed the chair — which was an earnest plea on behalf of the Council — the Council having agreed that speeches would actually be limited to three minutes. I do not think it is necessarily the best of use of time to have texts read out at some length and subsequently to have the same texts circulated. When I said three minutes, I meant three minutes. I am going to ask that from now on speakers who have texts circulate them — that is on the record. But could speakers also please enumerate the key points they wish to make orally, and take three minutes to do so. But, if, subsequent to this intervention by the presidency, we have a prepared speech that goes on for more than three minutes, I will gavel and that will be it, and the text is going to be circulated. I therefore appeal very formally to whoever is speaking, and it will be Jordan next followed by Australia, to understand that that is how I am going to do it, out of respect for the Council and for everyone else; rather than necessarily do it in quite such a formalistic manner. I think that is what the Council expected me to do and that is what I will try to do. With thanks to everyone who has contributed, could we try to do it that way, which will be more interactive as well.

The next speaker is the representative of Jordan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Goussous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish you every success in conducting the Council's business. I also cannot fail to express our gratitude to the brotherly delegation of

Syria for its efforts during its presidency of the Council last month.

In the light of Israel's continued unacceptable policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, its ongoing occupation of Palestinian cities, its violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, its continuance of settlement activities and its construction of a wall of separation around the Palestinian people — which violates the line of 4 June 1967 and imposes a fait accompli on the future of the Palestinian State — and given its continuing threat against the Palestinian leadership, the sharp increase in the suffering of the Palestinian people and Israel's employment of arbitrary security measures, including extra-judicial killings, as well as the continuation of violence and the collapse of the ceasefire declared by Palestinian factions, we find ourselves facing an extremely serious situation that threatens the political and peace process.

In this regard, we condemn the Israeli Government's decision in principle to remove President Yasser Arafat, who was legitimately elected by his people. We call on the Israeli Government to reverse that decision. We stand against all uses or threats of use of force against the Palestinian people or its leadership.

We listened with great interest to Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen and wish to reiterate once again our condemnation of the killing of civilians on both sides. The continuation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories will lead not to peace, but to the further entrenchment of the extremists' positions. Peace in the Middle East will be achieved only through the end of Israel's occupation of the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967; on the basis of land for peace and the resolutions of international legitimacy — resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) — and the Arab peace initiative; and through the commitment of all parties to the road map and the implementation of its provisions in order to achieve the goal of establishing a Palestinian State by the year 2005. Any other option will take much longer and require a far greater mobilization of international support.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Australia.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has taken a savage turn. Let us hope that this upsurge of violence will give everyone pause for thought.

In the two most recent terrible suicide bombings in which innocent lives were lost, there were three Australians among the injured. Let me take this opportunity to convey my deepest condolences to the families of all the innocent victims of this terrible and long drawn-out conflict.

Australia is disheartened that this latest upsurge in violence has come at a time when the Quartet's road map to a peaceful settlement, including a secure Israeli State in coexistence with an independent Palestinian state, was showing some promise. No one expected the way forward to be easy, but there was a growing sense of the need to persevere despite setbacks.

The latest setbacks have been bitter ones. We in Australia experienced last year's terrible Bali bombings and we know how difficult it is to look past such traumatic events to a future in which we work together to ensure they no longer happen. But this is what we must all do.

Australia shares the concern of other countries about the Israeli cabinet's decision in principle to remove Mr. Arafat and the subsequent statement by Mr. Olmert, Israel's Deputy Prime Minister, that expulsion was one option, liquidation another. Let me be clear: Australia supports neither of these options. They will not advance the road map. All parties must cooperate to bring an end to terrorism.

We welcome the support in the Palestinian draft resolution for the road map. We support, too, the call for an end to all violence. Last year, we said we hoped that the road map would be given a chance to work. The road map is the only available internationally endorsed path to a peaceful settlement. It has to be made to work — we must all help to ensure that it does. There is really no rational alternative.

Central to prospects for the road map's success will be credible guarantees for the security of the Israelis. Australia makes no apology for its abiding commitment to Israel's territorial integrity and its right to exist in peace and security. We have also called for a viable and independent Palestinian State and have said that we would be generous in our support for a new Palestinian State.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Italy.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and the acceding and aligned countries.

The European Union presidency and member States express their strong condemnation of the decision in principle by Israel to expel the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority and rally their support for the Security Council call on the Government of Israel, made on 12 September, not to implement it. The European Union has already clearly voiced its opposition to any forceful action against the duly elected President of the Palestinian Authority and has urged the Israeli Authorities to refrain from any such action. The European Union believes that the Israeli decisions is a serious mistake and adds further tension, undermining any negotiated solution of the ongoing conflict.

The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens. Such attacks obstruct the efforts of the international community to restore peace in the region and damage the interests of the Palestinian people. The European Union considers the authors of these acts as enemies of peace. It strongly urges the Palestinian Authority to take all necessary concrete measures against those terrorist organizations that are opposed to any political dialogue and undermine all efforts to restore hope and to bring peace, security and better conditions of life to the region.

It is in this context that the European Union has inserted the political branch of Hamas into the European list of terrorist organizations. The European Union renews the call made by the Thessaloniki European Council upon all Palestinian organizations to declare immediately an unconditional ceasefire. The European Union recalls also that the conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council called on Israel to abstain from any punitive measures, including extrajudicial killings, and to act in accordance with international law.

The European Union reaffirms the strategic importance of the Palestinian Authority as a partner for peace. The European Union has strongly emphasized that the new designated Prime Minister, Ahmed Qurei, must rapidly form a new Palestinian Government that is empowered to act decisively on the priorities of the fight against terrorism, the efforts to relaunch the peace process with Israel in the framework of the Quartet road map, and the continuation of Palestinian Authority political and economic reforms without any further delay.

The European Union strongly believes that, in order to achieve a lasting, just and peaceful settlement of the conflict and a comprehensive peace in the region, including Syria and Lebanon, there is no alternative to the speedy implementation, in good faith by the two sides, of the Quartet road map, which contains clear timelines for the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel together in peace and security, and for the normalization of Arab-Israeli relations.

It is in this regard that the European Union has urged both parties to take the following measures. The Palestinian Authority should form a new Government; reorganize its security forces under the control of the new Prime Minister; re-establish public order and undertake visible efforts to dismantle the terrorist organizations; implement the reforms already started; and organize, in due time, free and transparent elections.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): We truly respect the decision of the Security Council to give us this little time to come and speak, but we would like to put to the Council for next time that the issue of the Middle East is extremely important to us and we would really like to have the time one day for our views to be heard.

My statement is being circulated, so I will abide by the three-minute rule and simply say that we are especially concerned about a decision taken by the Israeli cabinet to expel President Arafat, who embodies Palestinian identity and national aspirations. My Government believes that advocating the removal, or even the killing, of the democratically elected President of the people of Palestine is utterly unacceptable and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

The Israelis and Palestinians cannot hope to approach a solution for peace by vowing to kill each other. The South African Government has always stated that violence as a tactic or strategy will never deliver the peace so dearly sought by the people of Palestine and Israel. We therefore join the international community in condemning all acts of terrorism and violence, particularly against Palestinian and Israeli

civilians. The international community is heading for a serious crisis unless immediate measures are taken to stabilize this situation.

The Security Council has consistently been unable to enforce its resolutions on the Middle East. As a result, the Council's pronouncements go unheeded and are violated with impunity. This adds to the growing perception that the Council is unwilling to act and that it risks becoming marginalized in dealing with this important issue.

The Security Council should immediately adopt a resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter calling for a complete cessation of all acts of violence, terror, provocation, incitement and destruction. Such a Chapter VII resolution should also demand that Israel, as the occupying Power, abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, as 12 August 1949. In particular, the Council needs to place on record the fact that threats to deport or kill leaders of the Palestinian people are unacceptable and illegal, as is the construction of a separation wall on Palestinian land. The Council should mandate the deployment of an international presence to monitor the implementation of the Chapter VII resolution by both sides.

The South African Government calls on the Israeli Government to act with restraint and expresses the hope that the Israeli Government will reverse its decision to expel President Arafat. At the same time, the South African Government also calls on the Palestinian people not to use violence as a means to acquire peace. We condemn all acts of terrorism and firmly believe that violence as a tactic or strategy can never be a substitute for a negotiated peaceful settlement.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodriguez Parilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since the provocative visit of Sharon to al-Haram al-Sharif in September 2000, almost 3,600 people have died; almost 2,800 of them have been innocent Palestinian civilians. The most massive, flagrant and systematic violation of human rights in the world today has continued. Every time there is a hope for progress towards peace, it is dissipated by deliberate extrajudicial executions. State terrorism and the use of modern and lethal weapons of war against the civilian population continue. A strange wall is being built to create a Palestinian bantustan. There are new Israeli illegal settlements and there is no end to the demolition of Palestinian homes. The suffocation of the Palestinian economy continues. The Palestinian Authority and its legitimate President, Mr. Arafat, continue under political and military siege, and their installations have practically been destroyed.

Without the end to the Israeli occupation, there will be no peace. The Security Council remains handcuffed by the United States veto, which has been used 25 times to stop the implementation of its resolutions. There cannot be a just and lasting peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian people exercise their legitimate right to establish an independent State with its capital in East Jerusalem; until all the occupied Arab territories are returned and Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 border; until there is an end to Israeli provocations in southern Lebanon, the return of Palestinian refugees is guaranteed and the Israeli settlements are dismantled, in accordance with Security Council resolution 465 (1980).

While it reiterates its condemnation of suicide attacks with bombs against Israeli civilians, who continue to be the innocent victims of the spiral of violence generated by the policies of their Government, Cuba rejects the manipulation of those individual acts to try to justify State terrorism. Cuba demands full respect for the person and dignity of President Yasser Arafat and calls upon the Council to act with energy, and rapidly. The General Assembly will also have to exercise without delay the far-ranging powers entrusted to it by the Charter.

I am sorry that the Security Council does not have the time to hear more than three minutes from Member States.

The President: It is not that we do not have time to hear. It is the fact that on Friday the presidency deliberately proposed that there should be an open debate, and that is what we are trying to provide. But so that the membership can have an opportunity, so that all can reflect those views and so that the Council can then do justice to the proper request for consultations on the subject, it is necessary to impose a guillotine.

I work on the assumption that in two minutes one ought to be able to get across three bull points. So three

minutes is a bonus. It is a bit of a challenge. It is not what we are accustomed to, but I defy anybody not to be able to make the main salient points in three minutes. I am trying to do justice to one and all, and without favour, as you see. It was the European Union that was cut off as the first speaker.

The next speaker is the representative of Argentina. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): This open debate provides us an opportunity to express our serious concern at a time when the situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate and the peace process is experiencing a severe crisis.

We have recently seen that the path to peace has been undermined by terrorist acts — the killing of innocent civilians, the re-occupation of Palestinian territories, settlement activities, humiliating treatment of civilians, the blockade and destruction of economic infrastructure and homes. Continuing along that path can only lead to greater suffering to both peoples.

In August and September, attacks by Palestinian terrorist groups in Israeli territory have continued, causing the death of dozens of innocent civilians. Argentina, which is familiar with terrorism on its own territory, energetically condemns these acts, which are crimes against humanity and cannot be justified in any way.

Israel has to respect the provisions of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. The deportation of persons, not to mention their physical elimination, is a grave violation of international law. That is why we join those who spoke before us to express concern about the decision in principle of the Israeli Cabinet to "remove" President Arafat. We agree that that could be dangerous and counterproductive and that it would further aggravate the tension already prevailing in the region. That is why we appeal to Israel not to implement the decision, but rather to file it way.

We believe that the path to peace is based on mutual concessions and on compromise. The Quartet drafted the road map on that basis, which is today the only alternative to violence and destruction. On the basis of that document, both Israel and the Palestine Authority must, in our opinion, simultaneously carry out parallel activities in the political, economic, humanitarian and security areas.

First, Israel must put an end to illegal settlements, withdraw from the occupied territories and put an end to any type of activity that erodes confidence between the parties, such as the building of the separation wall on Palestinian land.

For its part, the Palestine Authority must stop and dismantle the terrorist organizations. To that end, as is established by the road map, the Palestinian security forces must be restructured and should focus on achieving that goal. We hope that the next Palestinian Prime Minister will have the required authority to undertake that indispensable task.

The alternatives before the parties are clear. They can continue on the path of confrontation and mutual rejection, avoiding all compromise and pretending erroneously to find a solution through force. This is the path of suffering for both peoples and can only aggravate the violence.

The other option, which we strongly support and encourage the parties to adopt, is to reaffirm the commitments that were undertaken in Oslo, and which became a reality 10 years ago in gardens of the White House, with the return to the path of compromise and mutual concessions, which will reconcile the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to their real independence and personal dignity with the legitimate aspirations of the Israelis to recognition and security.

Argentina calls on the leaders of both countries to reaffirm their commitment to peace and to work together to make reality the vision of two democratic, sovereign and viable States, Israel and Palestine, living in peace and security in the Middle East.

The President: On the present schedule, could I say to my colleagues around the table that I am working on an assumption that there will be a certain amount of time available and that informal consultations will start at 5.30 p.m. That is my working assumption for the moment.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Indonesia, whom I now invite to take a seat at the Council table to make his statement.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): First, allow me to associate my delegation with the statement made

earlier by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the past few weeks, the situation in the Middle East has reached alarming dimensions. The future of the road map is very uncertain. In our view, it would be a great tragedy if all the work that has been undertaken by the Council and by the Quartet in this regard were permitted to go to waste.

The desire for peace in the Middle East and in the hearts of the Palestinians and Israelis is, we are convinced, superior to the violence and irrationality that are currently militating against the road map. In the view of my delegation, that desire, and nothing else, is the measuring stick of the strategic importance of the road map, and it is what we should continue to measure progress by. The international community can help move the road map forward by standing above the situation morally, politically and practically, rather than permitting itself to become a part of the crisis.

In our view — and this should be obvious — there is no reason to expect peace or the success of the road map if Israel has no faith in it. In particular, we urge the Government of Prime Minster Ariel Sharon to halt its resettlement policy, the extrajudicial killings, the construction of the separation wall and its aggression towards President Arafat and the Palestinian people. We object very strongly to any attempts by Israel to deport the elected Palestinian leader. Israel must also respect to the fullest extent international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

At a historic moment such as this, my delegation calls on the international community for their complete vigilance and support for international law. The Quartet and the Security Council must ensure that Israel fully pursues the peace process and avoids contradictory and inflammatory statements and policies capable of worsening the situation.

Today, we have reached a critical turn on the road to peace in the Middle East. To the benefit of the Council and the international community, the right turn is obvious: it is the one by which Israel faithfully implements existing resolutions. The Council has no option: it can do no less than to make sure that there is no deviation from this right turn. It is the only road that leads out of conflict and into the future.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Japan, whom I now invite to take a seat and make his statement.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): I have listened carefully to the briefing by Mr. Roed-Larson and the statements by the members of the Council. As evidenced by the rapid development of events in recent days and clearly demonstrated in the briefing and the statements, the road map is at a critical juncture. Japan is gravely concerned by this situation because peace in the Middle East is key to the peace and stability of the region as a whole, and the road map remains the only viable way to achieve peace. In order to salvage the road map from the current crisis, the ongoing vicious circle of violence and mistrust must be broken without delay. For that purpose, it is a matter of absolute necessity for both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides to restore calm to the situation immediately and to resume their dialogue and cooperation in accordance with the road map and, above all, to exercise the utmost restraint and to exert the maximum effort possible to bring the violence to a halt.

At this point, I would like to say a word with respect to the decision announced by the Israeli Government on 11 September to remove President Arafat. The removal by force of the President, who has been elected by the people, will not contribute to the improvement of the situation but will lead instead to a further worsening of conditions. Japan strongly requests that Israel not go forward with that decision. It is our fervent hope that Israel will fully consider the consequences of its own actions and proceed with prudence and caution.

At the same time, Japan recognizes and understands Israel's concern for the security of its people. The Palestinian Authority must be resolute in the battle to stop the violence being perpetrated by the extremist factions. Japan will continue to urge the Palestinian side to take action against the extremists and to strengthen their security apparatus as quickly as possible. We will continue our efforts to assist them in that area.

Terrorism cannot be justified for any reason. Japan reiterates its condemnation of the brutal terrorist attacks that continue to victimize large numbers of innocent people.

Japan will continue to support to the fullest extent possible the efforts by both parties to achieve peace.

We hope that under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Ahmed Qurei, the new cabinet of the Palestinian Authority will be formed swiftly and will bring renewed vigour to the efforts being made towards the successful implementation of the road map. Japan is committed to continuing its active support of such undertakings. The international community needs to assist the new cabinet.

However, let me repeat once again: it is imperative for both parties to end the vicious circle of violence and mistrust immediately. Only then can a true dialogue be initiated, based on mutual trust between the parties.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Saudi Arabia, whom I now invite to take a seat and to make his statement.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): We congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. We thank your predecessor for his remarkable stewardship of the Council. We also thank you for your response in convening this open meeting of the Security Council to consider the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories due to the continued aggression by the Government of Israel, its failure to carry out the commitments it has undertaken and its pursuit of policies inflicting open-ended destruction and forcing large number of Palestinians to leave their homeland because they find themselves living in intolerable conditions in their national territory.

The Palestinian leadership has made every effort to implement the road map. Various Palestinian factions made every effort and complied with a 50-day truce, until the Israeli Government violated that ceasefire by an aggression aimed at dragging the Palestinians into a new series of acts of violence, knowing that such aggression and the actions of the Palestinians would dash all hopes for peace as envisaged by the international community. The whole world condemned the decision of the Israeli Government to remove Yasser Arafat.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has condemned this serious Israeli escalation, which could lead to an explosion of the situation in the region and to the total collapse of the peace process. This decision not only is in breach of international law and Security Council resolutions, but also is a new affront to the peace process and to the Quartet's efforts to implement the road map, and it may be the final nail in the coffin of the peace process.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while it joins the international community in condemning this decision, calls upon all members of the international community — as represented by the Quartet — to move swiftly and decisively in the face of the Israeli policy aimed at denying the will of the Palestinian people and confiscating their land and legitimate institutions. History will not look kindly on the international community for not attempting to do justice to the Palestinian people, for leaving the solution to Israel's dictates, for being biased towards Israel and for allowing Israel to attempt to make peace according to its own vision and its own interests in defiance of judicial norms and the international community's demands. Israel has been and continues to be the genuine cause of the failure of the peace process.

Bias towards Israel has undermined the peace process in the past and will cause its total collapse in the future if this situation prevails. The influential Powers are not playing the role of honest broker. Conferences and initiatives will lead nowhere if they give the impression that nothing can be done and that the road ahead is clear. The international community in general, and the Quartet in particular, must implement the road map and must confront Israel's efforts to torpedo international peace efforts aimed at bringing about just and comprehensive peace to the region.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Brazil. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): The grim trend of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in recent weeks makes the convening of this open debate both timely and commendable. The new cycle of violence that is taking place in the region as a result of suicidal attacks and retaliatory military incursions, afflicting the civilian populations on both sides, jeopardizes the prospects for implementation of the road map.

The Brazilian Government noted with deep concern the Israeli security cabinet's recent decision to "remove" the President of the National Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, from the Palestinian territories. We view with even greater alarm explicit statements on the assassination of President Arafat.

Brazil recognizes him as a legitimate authority democratically elected by the Palestinian people. In that connection, the Government of Brazil calls on Israel to renounce the decision adopted by its security cabinet and once more urges the Israelis and the Palestinians to act with the utmost restraint. Their return to the negotiating table is the only path conducive to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the conflict in the Middle East.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei. His many diplomatic skills — as reflected in his contribution to the Oslo process — will be important for the resumption of contacts with his Israeli partners in the quest for a new momentum in the peace process.

Finally, Brazil reaffirms its full support for the work of the Quartet and its goal to promote, with the international community's cooperation, an end to terrorism and violence, an end to occupation and a permanent settlement of the conflict based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and other relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We call upon the parties to comply immediately and thoroughly with those resolutions, especially to bring about a meaningful ceasefire and Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah. We reaffirm our willingness to contribute to the implementation of initiatives capable of leading to an improvement of the situation in the region, including by participating in an international mobilization under the aegis of the United Nations.

The President: I am exceedingly grateful to colleagues for the forbearance with which they are dealing with the totalitarian regime in the Chair by respecting the three- minute limit.

In terms of the way ahead, there are now four speakers inscribed on my list. I have asked Mr. Roed-Larsen if he would like to reply and pick up any points in the debate, and he will do that afterwards. Then there will be the traditional right of reply by the two ambassadors who kicked off this debate, and, if they want to take advantage of that, I should like — in fairness, because the arguments have been well put, especially by them — to restrict them also to no more than three minutes in any concluding remarks that they may wish to make. That will permit the Council to respect a timetable of 5.30 for informal consultations to begin.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the current month. I should also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to sisterly Syria for its effective stewardship of the Council last month.

We followed closely the briefing that Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen gave to the Council this morning on the most recent developments in the region, and I should like to take this opportunity to thank him for his efforts.

This meeting is of utmost importance in light of the serious events in the occupied Palestinian territories. The danger is growing daily as a result of the Israeli Government's provocative actions, the most recent of which was the decision in principle to remove President Yasser Arafat from the Palestinian territories. Even more alarming are suggestions by high-ranking officials of the Israeli Government that there might be more serious actions.

In that connection, Tunisia reaffirms before the Security Council the legitimacy of the Palestinian presidency and of the Palestinian National Authority, and believes that any action violating that legitimacy would further complicate the situation in the Middle East and jeopardize the peace process in the whole region. Therefore, Tunisia supports the Arab Group's initiative to request that the Council convene this meeting in order to shoulder its responsibilities in that regard. In addition, Tunisia stresses the need for Israel to comply with its commitments under the peace process and under international law.

While the international community is attempting to bring calm to the region and to salvage the peace process, the Israeli Government persists in its policies of besieging Palestinian cities and towns, demolishing houses and infrastructures, extrajudicial killings, and building the separation wall. In the light of the gravity of the situation and the threat to security and stability that it poses to the entire region, Tunisia reiterates the call made by the President of the Republic of Tunisia, His Excellency Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, at the Arab Summit, held at Cairo in October 2000, to ensure protection for the brotherly Palestinian people through the deployment of international forces to separate the

parties and to monitor the ceasefire, a proposal that was supported by many members of the international community.

The President: I commend the representative of Tunisia for speaking within the time limit, for which I am grateful.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): Turkey has aligned itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. That statement thoroughly expresses our shared concerns about the dangerously deteriorating situation on the ground and calls upon the parties to act in a sensible and responsible manner, hence preserving the hopes of restarting the negotiations on the implementation of the road map. I am taking the floor to briefly emphasize a number of points that, from our perspective, have particular importance.

As we have stressed on numerous occasions, the current critical juncture in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict requires both sides to act, more than ever before, with the utmost restraint. Turkey is gravely concerned about the recent decision in principle by Israel's security cabinet to expel Mr. Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian National Authority. The international community and the Secretary-General, by drawing attention to the serious repercussions of such an action, have justifiably called on Israel not to implement this decision. We are concerned that its implementation could trigger developments that might jeopardize the stability of the whole region. Furthermore, we do not believe it serves any purpose in our quest to solve the current stalemate in the Middle East.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not an issue that can be resolved without the support of the international community. Furthermore, the conflict has aspects pertaining to regional and global security that impose heavy responsibilities, not only on the parties, but also the international community — just like in Iraq, where the Security Council is trying to formulate a suitable framework and appropriate procedures to bring stability to that country.

The terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians have consistently been denounced in the strongest terms by Turkey. The Palestinian Authority has been reminded of its responsibility to take all the necessary measures to halt violence. On the other hand, the methods used by Israel in its fight against terror apparently fuel enmity, and should be discontinued. The main premise of the Quartet road map is to convincingly provide the parties with the objective of two States living side by side with recognized and secure borders.

This objective cannot be achieved unless both sides display a true determination to fulfil their respective responsibilities. Establishing security is, indeed, of paramount importance, but it is not the single most important aspect of this question. In fact, the process of strengthening security cannot be convincingly decoupled from the political process itself. The Palestinian people are struggling for their very existence. Improvements that they could see in their daily lives would positively influence the security situation on the ground.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Norway. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): The tragic events of the past few weeks have unfortunately brought the Middle East peace process to a virtual standstill. We are back to the situation of a cycle of escalating violence. Suicide bombs and targeted killings do not achieve the objectives of ending terrorism and occupation. Norway strongly condemns the use of violence as a means to end the political conflict in the Middle East.

The road map is not dead. It has been endorsed by both Israel and the Palestinians. It has broad international support. We are now at a critical juncture where all parties have to strengthen their efforts to revive the peace process and ensure the implementation of the road map.

The Palestinians must fight terrorism vigorously. Security structures must be strengthened and reformed under a unified line of control. Concrete measures against the terror infrastructure must be taken. The reform process outlined in the road map must proceed, and the road map's focus on the parallel implementation of measures by the two parties must be revived.

Israel must stop the targeted killings, the demolition of houses and the disproportionate use of force. In order for the Palestinian Authority to

successfully combat terrorism, Israel must assist in giving the Palestinians hope for a political solution to the conflict. A freeze on settlements, a halt to the construction of the security fence and a resumption of the withdrawal of military forces are central elements of the first phase of the road map.

Norway deplores last week's decision by the Israeli Cabinet with regard to the elected Palestinian President — to remove him in a manner and at a time to be decided. Such a decision can only contribute negatively to the peace process and will make it more difficult for the Palestinian Authority to combat terrorism. The international community, and the Quartet in particular, need to strengthen their efforts in providing a robust monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the road map. The past two months clearly show that without this in place the process will derail and progress will not be made.

Norway will continue to actively support the road map — as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee group, as a participant in the Task Force on Palestinian Reform, as Co-Chair of the local aid coordination group and as head of the observer mission of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron.

We thank the United Nations for its relentless efforts to ease the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territory through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other agencies, as well as for its important role in local donor coordination. We know that the United Nations will continue this important operational work, while contributing, through the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Coordinator, to the political efforts of the Quartet. These efforts have Norway's full support.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Nepal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): My delegation views with serious concern the unfolding situation in the Middle East. Once again, the Middle East has descended into a cycle of terrible violence between the Palestinians and Israelis. Innocent civilians are being killed on both sides, and the Israeli Government has reportedly decided to remove Mr. Yasser Arafat, an elected leader of the Palestinian people. Each of these developments pushes a political solution a little further from our grasp. The world community and individual countries have launched a number of initiatives to resolve the longstanding problem in the Middle East. Among those initiatives, the Oslo Accords brought some hope — though it was soon to be dashed in the fire of retaliatory violence. The road map drawn up by the Quartet is also facing a very uncertain future.

The international community must continue its efforts to bring peace and security to the Middle East. However, first and foremost, the Palestinians and Israelis themselves will have to bring their political will to bear to find a durable solution to this tragic problem. History has put the Palestinians and Israelis together in a small piece of real estate in the Middle East which both sides hold holy and dear. No one can wish the other away. Both peoples will therefore have to find a way to live side by side.

The road map, despite its many shortcomings, is the only way forward to help find a political solution to the Middle East problem. Violence must stop, and sincere dialogue must begin for both sides to restore hope in the political process envisaged in the road map. We must not allow a handful of extremists on either side to spoil the peace process. All sides must meet their specific obligations if the process is to move forward. The Palestinian Authority should do everything in its power to control the extremist elements in Palestinian society that are perpetrating attacks against innocent Israeli civilians. It must consolidate the security forces and empower the new Palestinian Prime Minister to engage in serious negotiations with the Israeli Government.

The Israeli Government, on the other hand, must stop using excessive force. It must withdraw from the occupied territories forthwith, cease its extrajudicial killings of Palestinian leaders and stop demolishing civilian buildings and infrastructure. Illegal settlements and walls built in the occupied territories are an obstacle to peace and must be dismantled.

My delegation denounces the decision of the Israeli Government to remove Mr. Yasser Arafat, and urges the Israeli Government to rescind that decision forthwith. The members of the Quartet and the wider global community should bring their influence to bear on both sides so that they exercise the utmost restraint and desist from taking any drastic steps that would only worsen the situation and make peace even more remote. The Security Council should help the Israelis and Palestinians to build bridges for a shared, peaceful

and secure future through the effective implementation of the road map.

The President: If I may, I will now turn to Mr. Roed-Larsen. After him, we will hear the Permanent Observer of Palestine and the representative of Israel. The debate will then conclude.

Mr. Roed-Larsen: I have taken note of the fact that many members of the Council share my deep concern and sadness over the new bloodshed and the deepening crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, it has been both heartening and encouraging to hear so many members supporting the efforts of the Quartet, as well as to hear voices agreeing that, in order to restart, we have to speed up the road map process — moving from baby steps, if I may say so, to bigger and bolder steps. I have also taken note of the fact that, despite deep differences, both the Palestinian and the Israeli representative here — although with very different perspectives — still keep the road map as their reference point.

New confidence between the parties has to be shaped through deeds. I would like to emphasize that those have to address the two main concerns, namely, territory and terrorism. At this stage, I believe no Palestinian leader can put an end to all forms of terror without broad popular support for the necessary and painful security measures that have to be taken. However, such popular support can only be mustered through the Palestinian people seeing, in real terms, at least the beginning of the end of the occupation. That means, in operational terms, starting the vacating of settlements and halting work on the wall. On the other hand, no Prime Minister can muster popular support for territorial concessions under waves of terrorist attacks murdering innocent civilians.

As I see it, only simultaneous, reciprocal steps — where one side concedes land and the other stops terror — can bring us back to the path of the road map and lead us rapidly forwards to the defined end-goals of the road map.

The President: I thank Mr. Roed-Larsen for that clarification and, more especially, for all the great work he is doing on behalf of the United Nations.

Ambassador Al-Kidwa has asked to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (spoke in Arabic): We had hoped that the Security Council would today have been able to listen to an exposition of serious positions from both the Palestinian and Israeli parties. We have tried to do our best and have kept to the agenda. However, Israel's statement has fallen to low levels that are improper for this international forum. Such a statement could nevertheless assist the Council in adopting a more strongly worded resolution. That statement represents a flagrant challenge to the international community and reflects Israel's arrogance of power based on automatic protection of Israel.

The Israeli representative's statement also included racial allusions to the entire Palestinian people. That comes as no surprise, given the mentality of occupation and colonialization. His statement was also replete with falsehoods and misrepresentations of the facts, particularly with regard to President Yasser Arafat. I will not even attempt to answer those points.

However, the representative of Israel speaks on behalf of a Government whose Prime Minister and many of whose members have been accused of war crimes. Prime Minister Sharon, in particular, was responsible for the Sabra, Shatilla, Kibya and Khan Younis massacres. Some of Israel's leaders were responsible for introducing terrorism to the region in the first place. One can ask the United Kingdom, the Power that held the Mandate in Palestine, about that. One could also refer to Count Bernadotte, who was also in Palestine. The list is very long. Many official massacres have been committed, including those at Deir Yassin and Kufr Kassem, among other places. There have also been attacks against airports, like the Beirut airport, the downing of airplanes, including a Libyan airliner; the sinking of the *USS Liberty*; the assassination of many members of the Palestinian cadres; the targeting of Arab civilian targets in the Golan; and the assault on the Bahr Al-Bakar school, among other incidents.

However, the worst war crime in modern history is the transfer of over 400,000 settlers to Palestinian territories in order to colonize them: a colonialist settler movement at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

That is to say nothing of the long list of war crimes that have been committed during the last three years, foremost of which are extra-judicial killings.

At any rate, speaking outside the Chamber between the morning and afternoon sessions of this meeting of the Security Council, the representative of

Israel stated that the Council had been hypocritical. He also decided that the Permanent Observer of Palestine did not represent the Palestinian people. I hope he does not decide at the end of this meeting to withdraw official status from all of us.

The President: I call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): I must say that I am very saddened — and I say that even with a tinge of pity — at the pathetic remarks of the Palestinian representative. Unfortunately, I will be unable to meet him at his level, because the descent would be too abrupt. He has proved once again that he represents the dark past of the Palestinians rather than the bright future they truly deserve.

As to the claim that Yasser Arafat is a legitimate leader, let me remind the Council that the Palestinians thought that Saddam Hussain was a legitimate leader, along with many other people whom history has chosen to remove from the stage.

The mere fact that the Palestinian representative has felt the need to refer to very dubious events and inventions that happened 50, 60 or 70 years ago proves the very poor case and the very blatant demagoguery that I prefer not to answer.

The President: I thank all of those who have contributed to a fairly long debate, but I think a good debate. We have managed 47 interventions — which I think is not bad — and we have done so in a way that has preserved a sense of the importance of the subject and that I hope has done justice to what we are trying to do as the Security Council.

The Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. Informal consultations will begin in 10 minutes.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.